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ABSTRACT

This report describes an intervention program for improving social skills. The targeted population comprised a kindergarten, second grade, second grade physical education, and trainable mentally handicapped primary aged classes. All sites were located within 60 miles of a major metropolitan area. The lack of social skill development was documented through teacher surveys, social worker surveys, student behavior checklists, and anecdotal records. Analysis of probable cause data indicates home, school, and society all play a role in the existing problem. Intervention strategies developed after reviewing solution strategies suggested in research for improving social skills and analyzing the problem setting. Cultivating a positive classroom environment, direct instruction of social skills, and cooperative learning activities are implemented to improve the positive behavior and prosocial classroom environment. Postintervention data shows that students demonstrated an improvement in their prosocial behavior. Appendix A is the Teacher Survey; Appendix B is the Social Worker Survey; Appendix C is the Student Behavior Checklist; and Appendix D is Literature Selections. (Contains 6 tables, 2 figures, and 27 references.) (Author/MKA)

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IMPROVING PROSOCIAL BEHAVIOR THROUGH SOCIAL SKILL INSTRUCTION

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An Action Research Project Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the

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DEDICATION

We dedicate this project to our students who inspire us everyday.

ABSTRACT

This report describes an intervention program for improving social skills. The targeted population consisted of a kindergarten, second grade, second grade physical education, and trainable mentally handicapped primary aged classes. All sites were located within 60 miles of a major metropolitan area. The lack of social skill development was documented through the use of teacher surveys, social worker surveys, student behavior checklists, and anecdotal records.

Analysis of probable cause data revealed home, school and society all play a role in the existing problem.

After reviewing solution strategies suggested in research for improving social skills and analyzing the problem setting, intervention strategies resulted. Cultivating a positive classroom environment, direct instruction of social skills, and cooperative learning activities were implemented to improve the positive behavior and prosocial classroom environment.

Post intervention data indicated that the students demonstrated an improvement in their prosocial behavior.

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CHAPTER 1

PROBLEM STATEMENT AND CONTEXT

General Statement of the Problem

The students of the targeted Kindergarten, Second grade, Second grade physical education, and Trainable Mentally Handicapped primary aged classes exhibit lack of social skills including inappropriate physical actions and verbal communication. Evidence for the existence of this problem includes student behavior checklists, socia' worker surveys, teacher surveys, and anecdotal records.

Immediate Problem Context

There are four sites. They will be compared as well as described individually.

Comparison of Sites

Information regarding the targeted classrooms presented in this study are represented in tables. Table 1 presents racial/ethnic background and total enrollment of the students. Table 2 presents attendance, mobility, and chronic truancy. Table 3 presents average class size. Table 4 presents teacher/administrator characteristics.

In Table 1, the four school settings reflected in the table suggest that as the sites are compared overall each has a very diverse racial and ethnic background. The total enrollment is very different between sites. Site D has the largest amount of students and site A has the least amount of students.

In Table 2 all sites greatly exceed the state average in attendance. Site C has a large percentage of student mobility and chronic truancy, which greatly contrasts the other sites.

In Table 3, the four school settings reflected in the table suggest that sites A and B are at or below the state average for class size at K, first and third grade levels. Sites C and D exceed state averages for class size.

In Table 4, the four school settings reflect that each site has a comparable amount of years of experience. Site B has a significantly higher amount of teachers who have attained higher levels of education.

Table 1

Racial/Ethnic Background and Total Enrollment

	White	Black	Hispanic	Asian/P. Islander	Native American	Total Enrollment
Site A	80.6%	0.7%	1.0%	17.7%	0.0%	417
Site B	90.5%	2.5%	2.4%	4.6%	0.0%	677
Site C	24.3%	62.6%	10.3%	2.7%	0.0%	329
Site D	78.8%	4.9%	7.0%	9.1%	0.1%	1340

Table 2

Attendance, Mobility and Chronic Truancy

	Attendance	Student Mobility	Chronic Truancy	Number of Chronic Truants
Site A	96.0%	11.9%	0.0%	0
Site B	96.0%	6.1%	0.1%	1
Site C	95.2%	31.6%	1.9%	6
Site D	95.3%	13.3%	0.0%	0

Table 3

Average Class Size

	Kindergarten	Grade 1	Grade 3
Site A	20.8	21.2	21.0
Site B	21.6	23.3	24.0
Site C	25.7	25.7	26
Site D	24.4	27.2	

Table 4

Teacher/Administrator Characteristics

	Average Teaching Experience	Teachers with Bachelor's Degree	Teachers with Master's & Above	Pupil-Teacher Ratio Elem.	Pupil-Admin. Ratio
Site A	13.0	44.3%	55.7%	17.7:1	277.7:1
Site B	14.0	28.8%	71.2%	18.2:1	231.1:1
Site C	14.2	51.4%	48.6%	20.6:1	155.0:1
Site D	10.1	58.7%	41.3%	23.8:1	309.2:1

School Setting of Site A

Site A is an elementary school which consists of grade levels kindergarten through fifth grade. The building has two levels. The upper level consists of third through fifth graders and the lower level consists of kindergarten through second graders. The school has four main hallways which form the shape of an "H". It is one of nine elementary schools in the district. In 1993, Site A included kindergarten students up through sixth grade students. Presently, the three middle schools now have sixth, seventh, and eight graders where as before they did not include sixth graders at the middle school level. This change took place because of the middle

school philosophy. The school is lead by one principal and one assistant principal and is located in an upper-middle class neighborhood. There are 36 staff members and approximately 515 students. Among these staff members are kindergarten through fifth grade teachers, learning disability/behavior disorder resource teachers, English as a second language teachers, music, art, literacy, physical education teachers, librarians, speech pathologist, psychologist, a guidance counselor, nurse, nurse's assistant secretary, and special education classrooms. The children have physical education twice a week, music twice a week, art for two quarters and computers for two quarters. The district has set a limit of 25 children per classroom at all levels. In some cases class sizes fluctuate and become larger than the intended size. Students go on many field trips and have various educational assemblies. The children are given ample opportunity to participate in many extra-curricular activities including Student Council, computer club, Intramurals, school newspaper, mini-courses, enrichment programs, 600 minute reading club, chorus, boy and girl scouts, Daisies and various Parent Teacher Organization sponsored events. The site's parent involvement is excellent. The Parent Teacher Organization from year to year has 100% participation. Parents volunteer in and outside the site's classrooms.

School Setting of Site B

The school is one of four public kindergarten through fifth grade elementary schools in the community. The elementary school was built in the 1970's and was designed to feature the "Open Classroom" model, which was popular in the late 1970's. During the late 1980's and into the 1990's the classrooms have been enclosed with movable partitions. The one story building which is built surrounding the library/learning center flows from five wings and connecting hallways. There is both a gymnasium, and lunchroom, as well as a multipurpose room. There also are two music/band practice rooms, and an art classroom/studio. The classroom grade

levels are grouped together in separate wings with three special education classrooms grouped together in the center of the last remaining" Open Pod" area.

The school is a medium sized elementary school, with a student population of 677 students, 321 boys and 316 girls and a staff of one principal, one assistant principal, 22 classroom teachers, 6 special teachers, 15 teacher assistants teachers, 10 special education teachers, one full time school nurse, two physical education instructors and two school secretaries.

There is a school wide discipline plan which is agreed to each school year by students and parents. During the course of the school year, most teachers include the involvement of the principal or assistant principal in matters of discipline.

Cooperation between the school and the home is adequate. The school has many parent helpers, most of whom stay actively involved throughout the school year, both working individually with students and assisting classroom teachers in their clerical tasks. The Parent Teacher Organization enjoys a high participation rate of staff and parents, planning monthly activities held both during school hours and outside the school day. Programs and clubs in place include school band intramural activities, scouts, Young Authors, reading programs, adult Mentoring, Student Council, and business partnerships with the business and industrial community.

School Setting of Site C

Site C is one of six public kindergarten through fifth grade elementary schools in the community. The building is one floor, with both primary and intermediate wings. The gymnasium is centrally located, serving also as a cafeteria. Music classes are held in a mobile classroom located in the faculty parking lot.

The school is a medium sized elementary school with a student population of 345. There are 25 staff members. Among these are a principal, two LD/BD teachers, two music teachers, one physical education teacher, one librarian, speech pathologist,

title one resource, guidance counselor, nurse, and teacher's aides. The children receive physical education and music two times a week. There is no art program. Students participate in several field trips and cultural arts programs during the year.

There is a school wide discipline plan which is agreed upon by both faculty, parents, and administration. During the academic year, teachers are encouraged to include the involvement of the principal in matters of discipline.

There is limited parental involvement at site C. The school has few parent helpers, and the Parent Teacher Organization has not been successful due to low parent participation.

Site C has several after-school activities for children to participate in:. There is a Y.M.C.A. sponsored After-school Club providing daycare, Drug and Alcohol Resistance Education, Random Acts of Kindness Club, extra-curricular sports teams, art club, Girl Scouts, internet club, tutoring programs, Junior Achievement, nature club, Project Pass (to encourage students at risk), and Peer Mediation. These activities are sponsored by teachers on a volunteer basis. Due to the limited number of community activities, these clubs enjoy high participation from students.

School Setting of Site D

The school consists of second and third grade students and is one of three public kindergarten through eighth grade elementary schools in the community. The school district was established in 1948 and was designed to be a campus type of configuration rather than neighborhood schools. The second and third grade building has two floors in which the gymnasiums and multipurpose rooms are centrally placed. The students are grouped according to grade level and housed within the school to create a school "within a school" type of environment. Due to such a large school population students are kept in their same houses each year, throughout their kindergarten through eighth grade education.

A committee consisting of parents, teachers, and administrators created the school wide discipline plan. This plan is followed by the teachers of the district and the teachers are given support by the building principals.

Parents of the school are very active in their child's education. Organized parent volunteer programs such as the Parent Teachers Association, volunteering on committees and in the classroom are some of the ways parents get involved in their child's schooling.

The school is a very large size elementary school consisting of 31 second grade classrooms and 30 third grade classrooms. The school houses 1351 students, 631 boys and 720 girls and a staff of one principal, two assistant principals, and 61 classroom teachers. The staff also includes LD/BD resource teachers, ESL teachers, librarians, speech pathologist, psychologist, guidance counselors, and a nurse. The children have physical education three times a week, music two times a week, and art once a week. Students go on various field trips and participate in cultural art programs throughout the year.

The school has various after-school activities for the children to enjoy. Adventure Club provides daily after school daycare on site. Intramurals are offered to third grade students only. Boys and girls both have opportunities to be involved in scouting programs.

The Surrounding Community

Each site is located in a different community within a 30 mile radius of each other. The sites will be described individually.

Community Setting of Site A

Site A is located in a well established and supportive community. Site A is one of 12 schools in the district in which 9 are elementary and 3 are middle schools. The high school in the district is located one mile from site A. This community is rapidly

changing and growing. Since 1996, there has been an increase of about 123 students each year. The surrounding neighborhoods are well kept and the park district is known for its excellence. Site A's district has a preschool program and a before and after-school program. The current population is 77, 500. The average home value is set at $209, 102. It is known as the "city of good neighbors." The community residents enjoy shopping at nearby malls, eating at restaurants, parks, and movie theaters. Recently, a racetrack in which many people attended has closed down. This has been a major attraction for many years and will be greatly missed. This may also cause a negative effect on the economy of this community.

Community Setting of Site B

The community that this school district serves is predominately residential. It is approximately 35 miles north of a large metropolitan city in the Midwest. The population is currently 19,174 (1990 Census Figure). The mean family income is estimated at $85,000. The average home value is $261,213. There is a regional transportation system which serves the community as well as a train station that connects this community to the surrounding metropolitan area. The historic downtown business district has been renovated to maintain its historic feel. Business development is undergoing significant growth, with several large research / light industry facilities located within the city limits. Community leisure attractions include a cultural center, community recreation park with a swimming pool, fitness trails, a nine hole Frisbee golf course, volleyball and tennis courts, and shaded picnic areas.

Community Setting of Site C

Site C is a part of a unit school district located approximately 60 miles north of a major metropolitan area, just south of a state border. The district is comprised of nine schools-one high school, two middle schools, and six elementary schools with a total enrollment of approximately 4,000 students.

The community covers a geographical area of eight square miles, and is predominately African - American with 34,978 residents. Business development includes a large pharmaceutical research laboratory. This facility is the cornerstone of the community's industry. There are several restaurants and small businesses. Leisure attractions include an 18 hole golf course, several park district activities, and public library events. There are limited resources for recreation among children and adults in the community.

Site C has a 7.1% unemployment rate (1991 Census). Approximately 50% of the community are blue collar employees who work in manufacturing industries. Over 40% of the student population come from a nearby Naval Training Center and are transient. Site C ranks in the lowest quartile according to the general state aid/equalized assessed evaluation per student. Based on state standards of the total students, 29% of families report receiving public aid. The mean family income of $31,455 is the lowest countywide. The average home value is $63,400.

Community Setting of Site D

The community that this district serves is a community that has gone from rural town to commercial leader with a mix of residential and commercial business. The village is approximately 50 miles north of a large metropolitan area. The population is currently 13, 701. The mean family income is estimated at $67,215. The average home value is $182,309. The village serves its community with numerous parks, shopping centers, entertainment and churches, as well as industry and business opportunities. In its early days, the community was primarily agricultural. There are several private, parochial, and vocational schools in the area, including a parochial high school, a co-educational Catholic institution. There is a local community college in a nearby suburb, which offers a two-year program for students interested in technical training or earning an Associate's degree for transfer to a four year college

or university. It has since grown into a major shopping, residential, and recreational center. An amusement park and outlet mall attract millions of visitors each year. The suburb's sales tax base provides approximately 50% of the total municipal revenue.

National Context of the Problem

When educators are asked to comment on the most critical issues facing them in the classroom, the most frequently cited response is "discipline." According to surveys by the National Education Association (Manuel, 1997), discipline in the classroom is a major problem facing teachers.

The problem of students exhibiting a lack of social skills stems primarily from the amount of discipline they receive. For the last 15 years, Gallup polls have reported the public's belief that the answer to many school problems is improved discipline. Among practitioners, particularly new teachers, classroom management and discipline remain their number one concerns (Veenman, 1984).

Grooper, Kooi and Schutz (1971), in a factor-analytic study of classroom behavior, identified the following categories of disturbing behaviors: physical aggression, peer affinity, attention-seeking, challenge of authority, and critical dissension. Grooper, Kooi and Schutz (1971) included in their list of discipline problems several student "fails to" behaviors: fails to pay attention, fails to show interest in work, fails to interact with other children, and fails to adhere to classroom rules. Children and adolescents who demonstrate inordinate incidents of inappropriate school-type behaviors will continue to fail to learn.

Misbehaving children are discouraged children. When they haven't made friends they feel they do not belong. Out of these feelings come attempts, often misguided, to achieve a sense of belonging and importance. To connect negatively is far better than existing as a nonentity. Misbehaving guarantees they will be noticed (Jones, 1997).

Knowing how to prevent and handle misbehavior lies in discovering the purpose behind the behavior. People coached in any one of several parenting philosophies that follow the teachings of Adler or Dreikurs (as cited in Jones, 1997) know that belonging is the motivation behind all behavior. People want to feel important and connected to someone or something.

As educators, we want children to become aware of their actions and learn different ways to approach their daily problems. This is why the teacher and the environment he/she creates is crucial. Today's research moves away from a focus on controlling students' behavior and looks instead at teacher actions to create, implement, and maintain a classroom environment that supports learning (Johnson & Brooks, 1979).

CHAPTER 2

PROBLEM DOCUMENTATION

Problem Evidence

Evidence for the existence of the lack of social skills including inappropriate physical actions and verbal communication was documented at all four sites. Characteristics of inappropriate physical actions include pushing, cutting in line, and lack of cooperation. Inappropriate verbal communication skills consisted of talking out of turn, inappropriate comments, and lack of manners. The information was derived from teacher and social worker surveys which were distributed the first day of classes, student behavior checklists, and anecdotal records.

Surveys

Figure 1 exhibits evidence of inappropriate verbal communication between students as documented by teacher and social worker surveys. The teacher and social worker surveys can be found in Appendix A and Appendix B. Surveys were given to teachers and social workers during the first week of September. Of the 32 surveys distributed, 22 were returned. Of all teachers and social workers surveyed, 96.8% felt inappropriate verbal communication negatively affected their classroom environment.

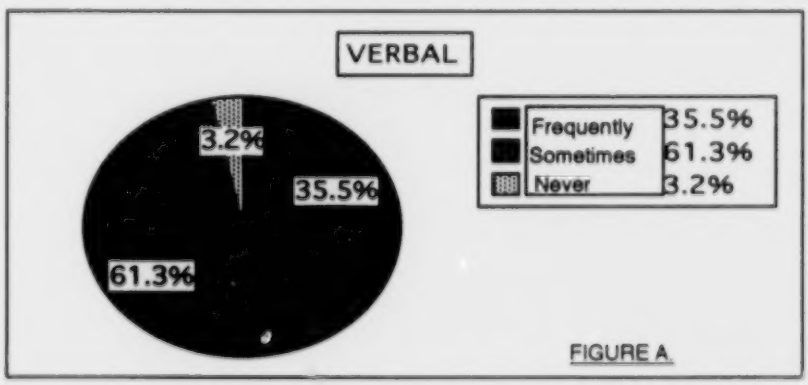

FIGURE A.

Figure 1. Inappropriate Verbal Communication.

Figure 2 exhibits evidence of inappropriate physical communication between students as documented by teacher and social worker surveys. Of teachers and social workers surveyed, 100% agree that inappropriate physical actions negatively affect their classrooms. The majority claim that these behaviors occurred sometimes. This provides evidence that such behaviors exist and interrupt the learning process.

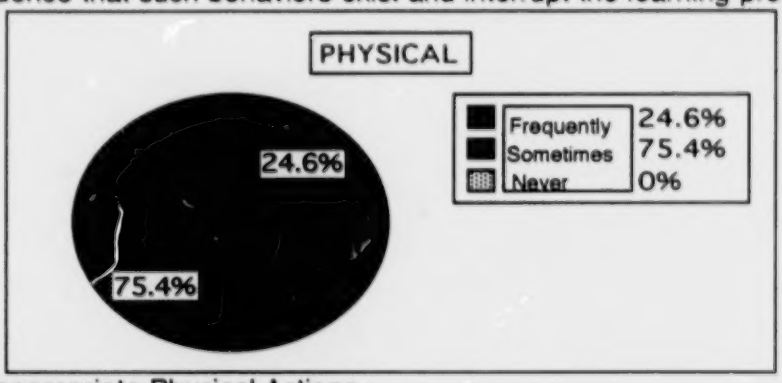

Figure 2. Inappropriate Physical Actions.

Teachers and social workers surveyed were asked how these behaviors affected their classroom environment. Most teachers agreed that these inappropriate behaviors took time away from academic instruction. These behaviors interrupted the learning process and disrupted other students. They stopped the flow of the lesson. One teacher stated, "Misbehaving students waste a lot of time and make the classroom environment more uptight and stressful." In addition to affecting the learning environment, lack of social skills also effects a students self esteem. These inappropriate behaviors are evident at all sites and are consistent with what researchers have found to be the leading cause of negative social behavior. This intern causes a negative classroom environment. At all sites negative social behavior was documented through the use of student behavior checklists and teacher anecdotal records. The student behavior checklist can be found in Appendix C.

Student Behavior Checklists

Table 5 represents the results from the student behavior checklist. The negative student behaviors observed were prevalent at all sites. The most common negative behaviors observed were lack of manners and interrupting. These results show evidence that there is lack of pro-social behavior within the given sites. Further evidence was documented in teacher anecdotal records.

Table 5

Frequency of Negative Social Behaviors

	Site A	Site B	Site C	Site D
Pushing	12	9	25	2
Cutting in line	7	13	5	0
Interrupting	20	23	10	7
Inappropriate Comments	4	17	9	1
Lack of Cooperation	8	20	6	9
Lack of Manners	25	10	21	25

Teacher Anecdotal Records

Through the use of teacher anecdotal records, all sites have documentation of significant inappropriate social behaviors. Site A documented a situation in which one student purposely pushed and knocked down another student in an attempt to be first in line. At site B, the teacher witnessed an occurrence where a student tried to initiate a social interaction, not knowing how to initiate such an interaction, he punched him to get his attention. The teacher at site C observed an instance when one child during Sustained Silent Reading shoved a child in order to have first choice of a book during Sustained Silent Reading. During the course of distributing playground balls in class, the teacher at site D documented a lack of cooperation and manners as students

stampeded for the equipment. All sites have documented similar experiences which have also been noted in research. It has been concluded that the anti-social behaviors illustrated at all sites can be attributed to several probable causes, which include the school environment, internal, and external factors affecting the child.

Probable Causes

Each September, teachers face the perennial challenge of maintaining an orderly classroom. They must make sure students are "on task" and learning. Teachers find ways to keep behavior problems to a minimum, and they must decide how to deal with those discipline problems that inevitably arise. Of course, there is no simple recipe. There are many causes for the lack of social skills in children today. Some major causes for the problem include: school environment, internal factors affecting the child, and external factors affecting the child.

School Environment

Children are not born with instinctive behaviors that help them to interact the first time they are placed in a social situation. Many of the children taught in schools today bring to school a wide range of attitudes and behaviors that often cause problems. If teachers expect students to work together, they must teach them social skills just as purposely and precisely as when teaching academic skills (Ostlund, 1992). Unfortunately, this area of teaching is often neglected. Much of what children learn about appropriate behavior at home and society emphasizes competition and reliance on authority, and yet, in the classroom, teachers are asking them to emphasize cooperation and social responsibility (Berliner & Casanova, 1989).

As stated in Morris (1996), the reactive approach to discipline is the most used approach by teachers to discipline students. Teachers react and handle disruptive behaviors on the spot and the teacher has no preconceived plan. This remedy in dealing with classroom problems creates inconsistency that will eventually undermine

the teacher's authority. Essentially, this is an impromptu classroom management style. One of the most common examples of this is backtalk. When the student talks back to the teacher, the immediate reaction from the teacher is emotion. Muscles tense, blood pressure rises, and inappropriate words spill out. When individuals are emotionally upset, a natural response is to fight back (Jones, 1996).

Teachers often fail to view problem behavior as a instructional task involving replacing forms of behavior. The problem with this approach is that it assumes that the intent desired by the teacher is the same one desired by the child. In many of these cases the validity of the inferred behavioral intent is denied. For example, when a child cried from frustration, instruction did not teach how to deal with frustration appropriately. It only tried to eliminate frustration (Cessna & Neel, 1993). In the case of blurting out, often times teachers reinforce the negative behavior if the answer is correct. Therefore, children learn to blurt out what is on their minds (Charney, 1998).

"Despite research that helps us understand which teacher behaviors and classroom practices contribute to children's prosocial development, recent emphasis on academic achievement has distracted our attention from it" (Berliner & Casanova,1989, p. 25). Many teachers falsely assume that teachers need to keep the focus on what education is meant to be... teaching and stimulating children to learn and strive for academic excellence. The goal must be to create intelligent productive citizens for communities. Most importantly, teaching social skills in the classroom takes away from their number one job... teaching academics. Many times teachers may be so entirely focused on academics that they overlook the negative behaviors such as lack of social skills. Neglecting to emphasize these skills can cause teachers to inadvertently de-emphasize children' use of pro-social behaviors. Students in turn will not use appropriate behaviors inside and outside of the classroom.

Internal Factors Affecting the Child

Children come to school with two kinds of backpacks. They bring the backpack with their gym shoes, homework, pencils, etc., and they bring their other backpack, the "growing up stuff" that all children work on in their long journey toward maturity. It involves learning how to identify feelings and master impulses such as how to stop and think before acting, how to modify impulsive reactions, how to plan ahead, and how to work with others. In some cases, children bring more serious issues such as low self esteem, stress, and lack of values. Students that do not know how to express their feelings and emotions in an appropriate manner often times have a negative impact on their surrounding classmates. The surrounding classmates and classroom teacher may inadvertently reinforce the negative behavior by calling attention to it. Behaviors that are reinforced often times continue to persist.

Following social failure, some children display a helpless response pattern, characterized by withdrawing from social encounter and blaming themselves for lack of social ability (Erdley, et al, 1997). As a result, the student gets constant negative feedback instead of being praised at school. Inappropriate anti-social behaviors show up such as throwing a book on the floor, defiant behavior, not sharing and not cooperating. As a result, the child lacks personal responsibility, develops low self esteem, and becomes a low achiever (Shandler, 1996). These factors contribute to the lack of social skills in classrooms. Some children enter the classroom situation unsure about appropriate boundaries that will create physical and emotional safety. This uncertainty causes anxiety (Palardy, 1997). Anxiety can cause children to act out in inappropriate manners. "A child's failure to identify and express feelings leads to frustration and self defeating behavior" (Aronson, 1995, p. 24). Some children come to school having limited experience with age appropriate social norms. A child who is socially troubled may exhibit some of the following misguided behaviors: insensitivity,

tactlessness, lacks age appropriate social maturity, has difficulty recognizing a dangerous situation, feels sad, bewildered, lonely, confused, and anxious. This student may also persevere in an action or activity even when it leads to punishment (Duke & Nowicki, 1996). These behaviors are a problem that teachers must face daily. The problems may stem from the lack of teaching social skills in the home and outside community. If social skills are being taught in the school they may not be reinforced at home.

External Factors Affecting the Child

There are a number of external causes for the lack of social skills in children today. Some causes for the problem include; the breakdown of traditional family values, the influence of television, the increase of violence in society and the lack of parental support.

Often times teachers expect their students to be respectful and have empathy for others but in reality they get very little encouragement at home and the teacher ends up bearing the responsibility for teaching the children social values (Shandler, 1996). The increasing violence in society and especially in schools is a major concern to school staff, parents and students. The increase in the frequency of these conflicts and the level of violence demand even more fundamental and far reaching approaches. There is a crisis of caring in todays schools. Many students do not feel cared for and they do not care about others (Emmett, et al, 1996). Long (1995) believes:

> The socialization of children is a complex interpersonal process in which the parents and other significant adults try to pass on their values and beliefs to the next generation. Their purpose is to ensure that a particular way of life is appreciated and maintained. But, for the past 30 years, traditional values have been scrambled by the rise of intellectual permissiveness and by the

> depreciation of authority figures. Parents became so ambivalent they did not know what to say or what to pass on to their children about life, love, and work. However, this confusion was not always present. In the 1940s and 1950's, the primary goals of society were clear, absolute, and consistent among most parents, teachers, and employers. Without any open collaboration, the institutions of home, school, and work taught children the values of responsibility, independence, hard work, commitment, respect for authority, and patriotism. (p. 42)

Children frequently encounter challenges in the social world, and they must cope with the possibility that their efforts may be rejected. How do negative social experiences affect a child's behavior at school? These children display socioemotional problems and eventually turn to deviant peers for support (Chen, Rubin & Li, 1997). These deviant peers may reinforce negative social behaviors.

Many children come to school exhibiting lack of prosocial behavior. Three significant factors have been found to contribute to the lack of social skills in the classroom. These include school environment, internal factors affecting the child, and external factors affecting the child. It has been noted that all four sites have additional factors which may affect student behavior. These include a lack of all of the following: a social skills training program for students, comprehensive school wide discipline plan, and a conflict resolution program. Fortunately there are some strategies to enhance social skill development.

CHAPTER 3

THE SOLUTION STRATEGY

Literature Review

Fostering prosocial behavior can be compared to depositing money in a child's emotional bank account. The interest bearing benefits include an improved self esteem, positive peer relationships, and enhanced academic achievement. Review of the literature offers several solutions to attain this goal. These solutions include the incorporation of direct social skill instruction, structuring a positive classroom environment, and implementing cooperative learning strategies and activities. The overall goal of social skill acquisition is to encourage students to be positive and keep on task; students who enjoy their time together care about each other and produce high quality work (Osland, 1992). When students are taught everyday how to behave, respect authority and lead a moral life from the first day of school to the last, they will become good students. Most importantly, they will have the chance all students should have to realize their ambitions and to be successful in life (Manuel, 1997).

If all students from kindergarten to high school were taught prosocial behaviors everyday, discipline problems would be eliminated, student learning would increase, and teachers would be free to do a better job teaching (Manuel, 1997). Several countries include direct social skill instruction as a part of their everyday curriculum. "Good manners and correct conduct are part of the Phillipine curriculum. In fact, it's the first subject listed on student's report cards. Because it is so prominent, students in the Phillipines are well behaved and respectful, and discipline problems are few and far between" (Manuel, 1997, p. 43).

Direct Social Skill Instruction

"The ideal program, even at the preschool stage, would provide some modeling, guided practice, and constructive feedback in cooperative social skills, along with language development and fun activities that make learning an active engagement for all students" (Bellanca, Costa & Fogerty, 1992, p. 203). A social skill lesson must include the following: hook, lesson, practice, discussion, feedback, recognition and transfer (Bellanca, et al. 1992).

The hook lesson is an introductory activity which is necessary when building a foundation for a particular social skill. The skill is best taught in a non-academic setting in a short duration. Role playing would be a good example of a hook activity.

Within the lesson, the children discuss what their experiences were and what they became aware of during the hook activity. The duration of the lesson focuses on naming and defining the social behavior to be taught that day. For example, one might use a graphic organizer such as a T-chart to illustrate specific behaviors of the social skill.

After the hook lesson, guided practice is needed. The targeted behavior should be practiced in intervals of five to seven minutes. A sample lesson for listening skills might include the Non-listening activity. In this exercise, partners deliberately demonstrate poor listening skills to experience how one feels when their words are not heard. The children reflect and discuss what they learned from the activity.

The next step is to give public and private feedback and recognition to students correctly exhibiting the social skill. Teachers may choose to keep a chart, employ the use of energizers, or tangible rewards (Bellanca, et al. 1992).

Finally, transfer must take place in order to insure the understanding and application of the targeted prosocial skill. "We have come to expect transfer, the carryover or generalization of learned response from one situation to another, as an

essential process for changing and improving our world" (Moye, 1997, p. 6). Direct instruction provides the framework and impetus to develop the necessary social skills. Although direct instruction is imperative, interaction among students must take place in order to promote mutual respect and develop prosocial behaviors. This can be done through cooperative learning strategies.

Cooperative Learning Strategies

Cooperative learning is a powerful tool which will enhance interpersonal relationships. "Learning how to work with others is an ability students will apply again and again once they leave school... What those in industry say is that, 'If you can't cooperate you can't stay here long" (Kohn, 1996).

> According to Bellanca and Fogarty (1991),
>
> Cooperative groups include two to five students of different ability, skill, motivation, sex, or racial origin who work to achieve a single learning goal. In the cooperative classroom, the teacher uses a variety of structures and strategies to build on-task attention, trust and shared success. (p. 2)

Some of these strategies include assigning individual classroom jobs using energizers and setting up seating arrangements to allow for face to face interaction.

When designing a cooperative lesson, there are five variables to be considered. These include building higher order thinking skills, bonding each group, individualizing learning, reflecting and clarifying, and concentrating on the specific social skill (Bellanca & Fogarty, 1991). In contrast to traditional learning groups, cooperative groups utilize higher-order thinking. This is woven into every lesson. Social skills are explicitly taught, and the teacher must focus on group interaction. Assigned roles such as checker, worrier, and materials manager are shared and mixed. Students' individual contribution to the group goal is evaluated by both teacher

and group. The groups look back and process their interaction through metacognitive activities (e.g. reflective journals). Students with different characteristics are mixed/matched with members sharing responsibility for the group by each having a role. Therefore students rely on each other to complete a given task (Bellanca & Fogarty, 1991).

"Cooperation is not just a nicety, it's a necessity for developing character. Learning how to work with others is an ability students will apply again and again once they leave school" (Kohn,1996, p. 4). In order for a classroom to become a safe and peaceful place to learn everyone must be willing to communicate and learn to work with one another. This fosters a positive classroom environment.

Classroom Environment

"When you enter a real classroom community, you know you have entered a special place; a place of real joy; a place where the creative spirit is alive and well, growing deeper and richer each day" (Salkowski, 1994, p. 33). If students are guided to think, cope with and solve problems, and exercise self discipline, they are provided with an environment that allows growth and positive long-term behavior (Jones, 1997).

Teachers should establish a routine the first few weeks of school so students automatically know what is expected of them. Each routine should have its own set of explicit and implicit rules that are known to both students and teachers. The classroom is set up by brainstorming class rules and consequences as a group. Through the use of role playing, children learn what is expected of them on a daily basis.

The teacher must state his or her expectations clearly and explicitly. The teacher can either make a set of explicit rules or have the students help to make them. The teacher must constantly emphasize the expected rules, and the students constantly test the rules against experience (Appleton, 1995). Students will need

visual reminders of the rules that need to be followed inside and outside the classroom. The rules should be posted for all students to see, a bulletin board should emphasize the social skills being learned, and job role cards should be used to remind the students of their daily classroom roles during cooperative learning time.

"The classroom in which children are challenged to be thinkers and learners has a different appearance" (Cameron, 1992, p. 33). The desks are arranged in a variety of ways to support cooperative learning tasks. They are often grouped in seating arrangements of two to five students. The role of the teacher is that of a facilitator who interacts with students within their cooperative groups.

Long states, "The socialization of children is a complex interpersonal process in which the parents and other significant adults try to pass on their values and beliefs to the next generation. One method for teaching values was the frequent use of sayings or adages" (Long, 1995, p. 46). These signs and sayings can positively influence thoughts and behaviors. Such signs should be discussed and created by students to be displayed in the classroom. An example of such a poster could be "When you sneeze, cover it please."

The preceding interventions as suggested in the literature are believed to promote prosocial behavior in the classroom. The following strategies were utilized to achieve this goal: direct social skill instruction, structuring a positive classroom environment, and implementing cooperative learning strategies and activities. According to Jones (1996):

> For educators, the challenge is to balance the academic curriculum with one of caring. Too much or too little of either curriculum tilts the balance of good schooling. Schools must become cocoons of caring where both high standards of academic performance and compassionate purpose are nestled. Students need to feel a sense of authentic unity-a-unity where

students are not driven or forced together but drawn together through natural ties and respect for one another. (p. 4)

Project Objective and Processes

As a result of social skills instruction, during the period of September, 1998 to December, 1998, the kindergarten, second grade, second grade physical education and trainable mentally handicapped classes will increase prosocial skills as measured by student behavior checklists, student activities, and anecdotal records.

In order to accomplish the objective described above, the following process objectives were designed and written. These objectives will guide the activities to be included in the action plan.

1. Classroom environment will be structured to cultivate prosocial behavior.
2. Direct instruction of social skills will be integrated into the curriculum.
3. Cooperative learning activities will be designed to cultivate prosocial behavior.

Action Plan

I. Data collection to show evidence of the problem (Beginning September)
   - A. Teacher Survey
   - B. Social Worker Survey
   - C. Student Behavior Checklist [on-going]
   - D. Anecdotal Records [on-going]

II. Classroom environment will be structured to cultivate prosocial behavior, beginning with the onset of the year.
   - A. Prosocial posters and sayings. (as described by Long, 1995)
   - B. Teacher and students cooperatively design classroom discipline plan.
   - C. Utilizing inspirational music during introductory activities.
   - D. Seating arrangement of classroom.

III. Direct instruction of social skills will be integrated into the curriculum.

A. Social skill instruction will be taught using the following techniques one time per week in 30-40 minute segments.

1. Introductory Activity
    a. Literature (See Appendix)
    b. Related videos
    c. Role playing
    d. Related activity
2. Direct instruction of social skill
    a. Graphic organizers for the targeted skill (example: manners).
    b. Modeling of positive and negative behaviors.
3. Application of social skill
4. Observation/Reflection
    a. Teacher will observe and point out positive examples of the targeted skill.
    b. Students will reflect on targeted skill through metacognitive activities.
5. Positive reinforcement system
    a. Praise
    b. Energizers
    c. Privileges/Choices

B. The following social skills will be stressed. A new skill will be introduced every other week.

1. Self control
2. Manners
3. Listening

4. Respect
5. Taking turns
6. Sharing

C. The teacher will continue to introduce new social skills while revisiting those skills previously taught.
   1. Student behavior checklist.[on-going]
   2. Anecdotal records. [on-going]
   3. Metacognitive activities.

IV. Cooperative learning activities will be designed to cultivate prosocial behavior one time per week in 30-40 minute segments.
   A. Children are taught the roles of cooperative groups.
   B. Groups will be formed heterogeneously.
   C. Team building activities will be formed.
   D. Cooperative group activities will be conducted throughout the course of the study.

V. Collection of data to assess effectiveness of interventions. (End of December)
   A. Student behavior checklist. [on-going]
   B. Anecdotal records. [on-going]
   C. Compare, summarize, and analyze data collected throughout study.

Methods of Assessment

In order to assess the level to which the problem currently exists within the targeted classrooms, and to determine the effectiveness of the intervention, teacher researchers implemented an assessment plan. The components of this plan include teacher surveys, social worker surveys, student behavior checklists, student activities and teacher anecdotal records. The student behavior checklists and anecdotal

records will be on-going. These records will be compared and analyzed from the beginning to the end of the intervention.

CHAPTER 4

PROJECT RESULTS

Historical Description of the Intervention

The objective of the project was to increase pro-social behavior. The classroom environment was designed to foster pro-social behavior. The objective was accomplished through the use of direct instruction, cooperative learning activities, pro-social signs and sayings, behavior checklists, student activities, and anecdotal records.

The intervention began the first week of September and lasted through the second week of December. The intervention began with a series of team building activities. Following the initial week of team building and introductory activities, direct instruction of pro social skills commenced. These skills included manners, self control, listening, respect, taking turns, and sharing. The lesson presentation included the use of literature, graphic organizers, role playing and projects related to the specific skill being taught. A new skill was introduced every other week in a 30 to 40 minute segment. The reinforcement of the pro-social skill was interwoven throughout the curriculum on a daily basis. For example, a teacher at site A stated, "I liked the way Kristy shared the computer during center time today."

During the course of the intervention reflective activities were interwoven throughout the instructional day and as a part of social skill instruction. Students were instructed in the use of energizers. Energizers are ways to replace inappropriate behaviors with affirming statements of others' efforts. Some examples include the "thumbs up" signal, wavy hand awesome, silent cheer, and round of applause.

The researchers originally planned to incorporate student journals which were meant to be utilized daily. However, the journals evolved into a meaningful, reflective component which was utilized upon completion of each social skill. In addition, one week of team building was incorporated to build cohesiveness and problem solving skills at each individual site. Following the intervention, researchers assessed the effectiveness of the prosocial skill training.

Presentation and Analysis of Results

Teacher checklists and anecdotal records were used to document the effect of the intervention on students at all four sites. In order to assess the effects of social skill instruction, student behavior checklists were used three times a week to record frequencies of negative social behaviors. Data was recorded during social skill instruction and at selected intervals throughout the week. Anecdotal records were used to record additional comments on individual behaviors throughout the course of the study.

Table 6 represents the results of the student behavior checklists for the twelve week intervention. Data for all sites were compiled and analyzed. Each skill was targeted through direct instruction and then reinforced with various activities. The expectation was that all students were to demonstrate the targeted social skills at the end of the intervention.

Over the twelve week intervention, all sites demonstrated a marked decrease in negative behaviors. The mean percentage of decrease in negative social behaviors was 84%. This was determined through a formula which showed a reduction in negative social behaviors between week one and week twelve. According to the data, the greatest decrease in the occurrences of negative behaviors was inappropriate comments. The smallest reduction occurred in the area of children pushing other children.

Additionally, other trends may be noted. The increase in pro-social behavior in weeks four and five can be attributed to intense focus on those particular skills being taught. Social skill training such as manners and cutting in line are more easily understood by students and therefore they grasped these concepts more easily. During the eighth week of the intervention all four sites were preparing for fall holiday festivities. During this period the researchers observed a significant increase in the lack of cooperation among students.

Table 6

Results of Student Behavior Checklists (Number of Incidences)

Week	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	% Reduction
Pushing	48	20	39	19	11	19	17	31	28	28	17	10	79%
Cutting in line	25	17	7	4	5	8	7	17	10	12	7	3	88%
Interrupting	60	21	39	44	32	97	39	34	31	38	31	19	68%
Inappropriate Comments	31	16	23	7	6	10	21	13	12	10	10	3	90%
Lack of Cooperation	43	34	42	13	36	15	17	66	57	16	13	5	88%
Lack of Manners	71	79	32	51	8	9	19	17	10	20	22	14	80%

Anecdotal records were utilized throughout the twelve week intervention. These narrative observations were used to record in greater detail student interactions, positive and negative social behaviors as they occurred, and teacher reflections. Teachers observed an increase in students cooperation which improved with every lesson. Students were able to stay on task and showed a gradual improvement in carrying out their assigned rolls. Teachers observed improved listening and sharing of responsibilities within the base groups. At site D, the teacher

noted initially that groups were often dominated by one student. With one leader, other students' ideas were stifled. As students gained experience and practiced sharing assigned roles, the groups became more cohesive, functioning as a unit. Each group was observed taking turns and sharing in leadership responsibilities through the use of round robin exchange of ideas. Students took turns going around in a circle listening to each others' ideas. Students enthusiastically participated in cooperative activities included within the social skills lessons. Through this analysis the researchers were able to draw conclusions and recommendations.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on the presentation and analysis of the student behavior checklists and anecdotal records, students showed improvement in pro-social behavior. The targeted social skill training enhanced peer relationships. These relationships were based on positive behaviors and improved interactions among students. The teachers were less involved with interventions, allowing students to take increasingly larger responsibilities in working through their conflicts. As a result, groups were more productive and problem solving was enhanced creating a positive learning environment.

As the intervention progressed, the researchers noted numerous positive behaviors occurring. At site A, the children consistently raised their hands before speaking. At site B, the children were covering their mouths when coughing or sneezing. At site C, the students showed an increase in positive comments in cooperative groups. At site D, the students listened more attentively to teachers and students when in cooperative groups.

While the data indicates the intervention was successful there are few adjustments that would be suggested. One major difficulty experienced at all sites was that students were resistant to their assigned role during cooperative tasks. The

researchers recommend that modeling and role playing be utilized to increase task acceptance. This would decrease student conflict over task acceptance and continue rotation of roles within cooperative groups will increase task acceptance. This in turn would help the children to understand why it is necessary that they strengthen their skills with every role they play within their cooperative groups.

A second area of difficulty was transfer of learning from teacher instruction to student consistent application of the skill. Negative behaviors such as inappropriate comments, lack of cooperation, lack of manners, and interrupting among group members were not entirely eliminated. However, the students' use of prosocial skills increased week by week. The researchers feel more time should be allocated to each social skill extending the intervention to a school wide year-long comprehensive program.

The implementation of a school wide social skills program which is integrated throughout the grade levels and school curriculum is recommended. This program would illicit participation from all students and staff members. Resources should be provided by the district through staff development to ensure success. A further recommendation would be to include a parent-school partnership. A newsletter informing parents about the social skills being covered could be sent home. This newsletter should include the skill being targeted, activities to enhance the skill at home, and a comments section to open a dialogue between home and school.

It is further recommended that the positive visual reminders which reinforced and encouraged the students to use positive social skills include illustrations as well as words. Non readers and visual/spatial learners would benefit from such modifications.

In summary, the goal of this intervention was to increase the students' use of pro-social skills. Through the use of direct instruction, cooperative learning, graphic

organizers, and student activities, the intervention fostered an environment conducive to pro-social learning. These social skills are necessary to be successful in school, at home, in the community, and in later life.

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APPENDIX A

TEACHER SURVEY

TEACHER SURVEY

I am working toward the completion of my Master of Arts degree through St. Xavier. My class will participate in a program which will enhance social skill development. In conjunction with social skills activities, I will be conducting research and collecting data on the positive effects of social skill development. I would greatly appreciate it if you would fill out this survey and return it to me by Friday. Thanks for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

PLEASE MARK THE BOX THAT EXPRESSES HOW OFTEN YOU SEE THE LISTED BEHAVIORS:

PUSHING			
CUTTING IN LINE			
TALKING OUT OF TURN			
INTERRUPTING			
INAPPROPRIATE COMMENTS			
LACK OF MANNERS			
LACK OF COOPERATION			

How do you address these issues in your classroom?

_____

_____

_____

How do you feel these behaviors effect your classroom environment?

_____

_____

_____

APPENDIX B

SOCIAL WORKER SURVEY

SOCIAL WORKER SURVEY

I am working toward the completion of my Master of Arts degree through St. Xavier. My class will participate in a program which will enhance social skill development. In conjunction with social skills activities, I will be conducting research and collecting data on the positive effects of social skill development. I would greatly appreciate it if you would fill out this survey and return it to me by Friday. Thanks for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

ARE STUDENTS ON YOUR CASELOAD REFERRED FOR SOCIAL WORK DUE TO ANY OF THE FOLLOWING BEHAVIORS. PLEASE MARK THE BOX THAT EXPRESSES HOW OFTEN STUDENTS REFERRED TO YOU DISPLAY THE LISTED BEHAVIOR:

PUSHING			
CUTTING IN LINE			
TALKING OUT OF TURN			
INTERRUPTING			
INAPPROPRIATE COMMENTS			
LACK OF MANNERS			
LACK OF COOPERATION			

How do you address these issues?

_____

_____

_____

How do you feel these behaviors effect the student?

_____

_____

_____

APPENDIX C

STUDENT BEHAVIOR CHECKLIST

STUDENT BEHAVIOR CHECKLIST

TEACHER:

	RATINGS: + = Frequently - = Sometimes o = Not Yet	PUSHING	CUTTING IN LINE	INTERUPTING	INAPPROPRIATE COMMENTS	LACK OF COOPERATION	LACK OF MANNERS	COMMENTS
1								
2								
3								
4								
5								
6								
7								
8								
9								
10								
11								
12								
13								
14								
15								
16								
17								
18								
19								
20								
21								
22								
23								
24								

APPENDIX D

LITERATURE SELECTIONS

LITERATURE SELECTIONS

MANNERS

Monster Manners by Joanna Cole

It's a Spoon Not a Shovel by Carolyn Buehner

The Berenstain Bears Forget Their Manners by Jan and Stan Berenstain

What Do You Do, Dear? by Sesyle Joslin

SELF CONTROL

Lilly and the Purple Plastic Purse by Kevin Henkes

LISTENING

Listen Buddy by Helen Lester

SHARING

The Giving Tree by Shel Silverstein

The Rainbow Fish by Marcus Pfister

Finders Keepers by Will and Nicolas

RESPECT

It's Mine by Leo Leonni

Stellaluna by Janell Cannon

TAKING TURNS

The Berenstain Bears Forget Their Manners by Stan and Jan Berenstain